AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

A complete list of all the presently or formerly pending claims in the application is provided below, with suitable headings to show the status of each claim and, where appropriate, its current text. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions.

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) In a gaming system comprising a central authority and a plurality of gaming machines ~~and a first database located in a central authority and arranged to store (i) input data to be sent to one or more of the plurality of gaming machines to keep said one or more gaming machines operational and (ii) output data generated by the plurality of gaming machines~~, wherein at least one of said plurality of gaming machines (i) comprises a meter configured to generate meter data, (ii) comprises a jackpot meter configured to generate jackpot data, (iii) is responsive to player cards having associated player identification numbers, (iv) is responsive to tickets having associated ticket validation numbers, and (v) is configured to generate tickets having associated ticket validation numbers, apparatus for providing data storage and communications between the gaming machines and the ~~first database~~ central authority comprising:

a first database located in the central authority and arranged to store (i) input data to be sent to one or more of the plurality of gaming machines to keep said one or more gaming machines operational and (ii) output data generated by the plurality of gaming machines,

wherein the input data comprises one or more credit balances corresponding to one or more player identification numbers and one or more ticket values corresponding to one or more ticket validation numbers, and

wherein the output data comprises meter data, jackpot data, ticket data, and player data;

a network; and

a data processing unit spaced apart from the first database and comprising:

a second database; and

a programmed hardware configured (1) to poll the gaming machines to obtain the output data generated by the gaming machines over the network, (2) to store said output data in the second database, (3) to transmit said output data over the network to the first database from the second database and then remove said output data from the second database after said transmission of said output data; (4) to periodically obtain the input data from the first database, (5) to store the periodically obtained input data in the second database, and (6) to transmit at least a portion of the periodically obtained input data required by one of the gaming machines to keep said one gaming machine operational from the second database to said one gaming machine without accessing the first database, said programmed hardware being configured to perform at least said process (6) without command from the central authority.

2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the network comprises a first network arranged to transmit data between the gaming machines and the second database and a second network arranged to transmit data between the second database and the first database.

3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a first processor arranged to manage the first database and a second processor arranged to manage the second database.

4. (Canceled).

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[4]]1 wherein the input data comprises at least one of ticket data, player data, jackpot data and meter data for gaming machines played within a predetermined preceding time period.

6-20. (Canceled).

21. (Currently Amended) In a gaming system comprising a plurality of gaming machines and a first database located in a central authority and arranged to store (i) input data to

be sent to one or more of said plurality of gaming machines to keep said one or more gaming machines operational and (ii) output data generated by said plurality of gaming machines, wherein at least one of said plurality of gaming machines (i) comprises a meter configured to generate meter data, (ii) comprises a jackpot meter configured to generate jackpot data, (iii) is responsive to player cards having associated player identification numbers, (iv) is responsive to tickets having associated ticket validation numbers, and (v) is configured to generate tickets having associated ticket validation numbers, a method of providing data storage and communications between the gaming machines and the first database comprising:

(1) polling the gaming machines to obtain the output data, wherein said output data comprises meter data, jackpot data, ticket data, and player data;

(2) storing the output data apart from the first database;

(3) transmitting the output data stored apart from the first database to the first database and then removing the output data stored apart from the first database after said transmission of the output data;

(4) periodically obtaining the input data from the first database, wherein said input data comprises one or more credit balances corresponding to one or more player identification numbers and one or more ticket values corresponding to one or more ticket validation numbers;

(5) storing the periodically obtained input data apart from the first database; and

(6) transmitting at least a portion of the periodically obtained input data stored apart from the first database to one of the gaming machines and keeping the one gaming machine operational without accessing the first database,

wherein at least said step (6) is performed without command from the central authority.

22. (Canceled).

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[22]]21 wherein the input data comprises at least one of stored ticket data, player data, jackpot data and meter data for gaming machines played within a predetermined preceding time period.

24-33. (Canceled).

34. (Currently Amended) In a gaming system comprising a plurality of gaming machines and a first database located in a central authority and arranged to store (i) input data to be sent to one or more of said plurality of gaming machines to keep said one or more gaming machines operational and (ii) output data generated by said plurality of gaming machines, wherein at least one of said plurality of gaming machines (i) comprises a meter configured to generate meter data, (ii) comprises a jackpot meter configured to generate jackpot data, (iii) is responsive to player cards having associated player identification numbers, (iv) is responsive to tickets having associated ticket validation numbers, and (v) is configured to generate tickets having associated ticket validation numbers, a method of providing data storage and communications between the gaming machines and the first database comprising:

(1) dividing the gaming machines into a first group and a second group;

(2) polling the gaming machines in the first group to obtain first output data, wherein said first output data comprises first meter data, first jackpot data, first ticket data, and first player data;

(3) storing the first output data apart from the first database;

(4) transmitting the stored first output data to the first database and then removing the first output data stored apart from the first database after said transmission of the stored first output data;

(5) polling the gaming machines in the second group to obtain second output data, wherein said second output data comprises second meter data, second jackpot data, second ticket data, and second player data;

(6) storing the second output data apart from the first database and apart from the first output data;

(7) transmitting the stored second output data to the first database and then removing the second output data stored apart from the first database after said transmission of the stored second output data;

(8) periodically obtaining from the first database first input data for use in the first group of gaming machines, wherein said first input data comprises one or more credit balances corresponding to one or more player identification numbers and one or more ticket values corresponding to one or more ticket validation numbers;

(9) storing the periodically obtained first input data apart from the first database;

(10) transmitting at least a portion of the periodically obtained first input data stored apart from the first database to one of the first group of gaming machines without accessing the first database when said at least a portion of the periodically obtained first input data are required by said one of the first group of gaming machines and keeping said one of the first group of gaming machines operational;

(11) periodically obtaining from the first database second input data for use in the second group of gaming machines, wherein said second input data comprises one or more credit balances corresponding to one or more player identification numbers and one or more ticket values corresponding to one or more ticket validation numbers;

(12) storing the periodically obtained second input data apart from the first database and apart from the periodically obtained first input data; and

(13) transmitting at least a portion of the periodically obtained second input data stored apart from the first database and apart from the periodically obtained first input data to one of the second group of gaming machines without accessing the first database when said at least a portion of the periodically obtained second input data are required by said one of the second group of gaming machines and keeping said one of the second group of gaming machines operational,

wherein at least said steps (10) and (13) are performed without command from the central authority.

35. (Canceled).

36. (Currently Amended). The method of claim 34 wherein the first input data and second input data each comprises at least one of stored ticket data, player data, jackpot data and meter data for gaming machines played within a predetermined preceding time period.

37-39. (Canceled).